

"The Dead in Christ."

A correspondent wishes to know what we think "concerning the *present* condition of the dead in Christ." The connection in which he suggests the point, shows that by "present condition" he means the condition of all the righteous dead during the period intermediate between that of their bodily death, and that of their resurrection at the second coming of Christ to raise the dead and judge the world.

We confess in the outset that we have no means of knowing how, subsequently to death, and prior to the resurrection, "the spirits of just men made perfect" exist in the after-life, and hence, cannot tell whether they so exist in the absolutely disembodied state or not. The Bible does not give any information on this point, and in regard to it human speculation is totally worthless. And yet there is nothing in the Bible that implies or even suggests that saints, dying prior to the resurrection, pass into the state of suspended consciousness and so remain until the resurrection, or that they are not at death admitted into the heavenly glory so abundantly promised in that Book. All the intimations lead to exactly the opposite view.

Jesus said to the penitent thief: "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Both went there on the very day in which both died, and to both it was a state of blessedness. Lazarus, as represented by the Savior, when he yielded up his breath, was at once carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, which means the society of Abraham. Paul was desirous of leaving this world that, as the direct sequel thereof, he might be with Christ. His presence here in the body he regarded as an absence from the Lord; and hence he declares that he was rather willing to be absent from the body that he might be present with the Lord. When the earthly house of his tabernacle should be dissolved by death, he expected at once to enter the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Our Savior, in his discussion with the Sadducees, clearly implies that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were in a state of conscious existence long after they were dead as to their bodies. Enoch and Elijah were translated, body and soul, and hence did "not see death." Moses and Elijah after their death came to earth and talked with the Saviour on the Mount of Transfiguration. John, in the seventh chapter of Revelation, mentions a great multitude of saints, who once lived on earth, and whom he describes as praising God in the heavenly world. These saints seem to be "the spirits of just men made perfect," spoken of by Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews. Those who "die in the Lord" are described as being "blessed," and as resting "from their labors."

We accept, on the basis of these Bible references, and believe the general idea of the Christian Church, that "the dead in Christ" retain their personal consciousness after death as perfectly as before, and are, without any purgatorial preliminary, at once admitted into the possession and enjoyment of their heavenly inheritance. The heavenly life begins with them the moment the earthly life is ended and remains as their eternal reward and blessing. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body, as taught in the Bible, does not imply the postponement of this life until after that event. The "spiritual body," represented as the product of this resurrection, will be an element in that life which before did not exist, and, judging from what the Bible says in regard to the resurrection, we may well suppose that this will add to the perfection and glory of celestial existence, while it will not be the beginning of such existence. The heavenly life, already begun, will, in some respects, assume new conditions in the direction of progress by the addition of the resurrection-body, which is to be like the "glorious body" of Christ.

It deserves to be noticed that, as to the order of events, Paul, in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, makes a distinction between "the dead in Christ" who shall be raised "when the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven," and those living, and remaining unto his coming. The former will "rise first," and the living, not having died, but having been changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," will "be caught up together with

them [the risen dead] in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," and both classes will "ever be with the Lord." "The dead in Christ," who "sleep in Jesus," and may have done so for centuries, are subject to no disadvantage by having died, and in respect to their bodies molded back to dust, as compared with those living when Christ comes in the final day. Their resurrection will precede the change of the living. This is the order in which the apostle places the events of the last day, alike in respect to the dead and the living, and with reference to which he says: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." There is comfort in Paul's words. We need not sorrow over the sleepers "in Jesus," "even as others which have no hope."—THE INDEPENDENT.

The Secret of a Victorious Life.

The word of the Apostle Paul are among the most precious legacies bequeathed to the world by great men; a legacy which derives its main value from the fact that it conveys that which was, in its origin, a gift from heaven. But quite as valuable as Paul's words in Paul's life. Those eloquent and powerful statements of truth which all subsequent generations have carried in their consciences and hearts would lose half their force if there were not behind them the impulsion of one of the noblest lives ever lived upon the earth. The single-hearted devotion to duty, the fearlessness, the noble temper, the patience, and the self-sacrifice of that life constitute one of the supreme achievements of history. For it is in character, and in character alone that the supreme achievement is to be found. Not in great works of architecture, nor in great books, not in great statesmanship nor in great social movements, is to be found the supreme achievement of which men are capable; a noble character remains among all the activities and attainments of men, the one supreme and final success; that which neither time nor misconception nor detraction are able to diminish or destroy.

The eagerness with which men turn to the stories of such lives as that of Paul is almost pathetic. They look away from their own failures and infidelities and sins to such a life, and find comfort in the fact that some man has really lived the life which each man would like to live in his best hours. The supreme disappointment of life does not come from any feeling that a particular object has not been attained, that the fortune so long worked for has never been secured, the fame so eagerly chased never overtaken, the great position so untiringly sought for never attained, but from the consciousness that in the battle of life one has been defeated; that, instead of mastering the difficulties and calamities and obstacles which surround every man, one has been mastered by them. The great satisfaction, the supreme comfort which springs from such a life as Paul's comes from the consciousness that here was a man who overcome every obstacle, and instead of being mastered by the things which seemed against him, triumphed over them. His was a life outwardly all defeat, inwardly all victorious. It appeals to and satisfies the inward aspiration of every one; for each of us feel that just such a life belongs to him; that we were not made to be baffled and beaten and vanquished, but to conquer and overcome, and to emerge from the struggle victorious against all odds.

The secret of a great life is never difficult to find. When Savonarola was brought to the rack, and his persecutors listened eagerly for the secrets they were about to wring from him, the reformer could only reply in his agony: "My secrets are few, because my purposes have been great." Paul's purposes were great, and his method therefore was transparent. Everything was against him, as men look at life. He stepped aside from the career which was open to him, and which promised the realization of the ambition of a Jew; he expatriated himself; he was a wanderer on the face of the earth; outcast, persecuted, rejected, despised, and finally put to death. All things conspired against him, and yet in the face of all these obstacles no one reads his life with any other consciousness than that here was a great and eternal victory. This man, with all the world against him, defeated the world, and calmly held it at bay. And this

great result was achieved, not by tricks, nor by persuasion, nor by great gifts of mind, but by a tremendous conviction and a life held steadfastly true to that conviction. Paul belonged to his time and to the world in which he found himself; but neither the time nor the world gave him his conviction nor his unconquerable energy of spirit; these things came to him from heaven. He conceived of life, of the world, and of society, not as things which should sustain and support him, but as affording opportunities for the outgo of his energies. He did not look to men for his purpose, for his strength, or for his consolation; for all these things he looked to God. It was a matter almost of indifference to him that men rejected him and spurned him and persecuted him. So long as he had the consciousness of a divine work to do, and of divine strength to accomplish it, he cared little for human aid or help. The world was to him simply the field in which his work was to be accomplished; he did not look to it for the rewards of that work. He belonged to his fellows for all service and helpfulness, but they could neither appoint his task nor reward him when it was finished. Like trees, he was rooted in the common soil; but, like them, light and heat, and the dews and rain which give foliage and strength, came from heaven. Here is the secret of his life, and here is the only secret by which such success as his can be attained.—THE CHRISTIAN UNION.

Good Counsel for Boys and Girls.

To one of his daughters at school Bishop McIlvaine gave the following counsel:

"Don't cultivate, dear N—, with any companion, that sort of violent friendship, which leads to a sort of confidential communication which cannot be made known to your parents. Be very particular as to whom you allow to be very familiar with you, as your near companions and friends. First, know well the person, before you allow a close intimacy; and the moment you see anything wrong in a companion, think what effect it should have on your intimacy. Learn to say No, decisively to any request or proposal which your judgment tells you is not right. It is a great thing in a child to learn to say No, when it is right to do so. Make it a rule to hear nothing from any girl which you may not be allowed, and would not be willing, to tell your dear mother. Be careful to let nothing interfere with your regular private prayers and reading of the Scriptures and labor to give your whole heart and life to God.—SEL.

Advice which like the snow softly falls, dwells longer upon and sinks deeper into the mind.

They are never alone that are accompanied with noble thoughts.—Sir Philip Sidney.

If you feel depressed or dishearted, sing some good old hymn, and sing it earnestly, and note the effect.

Right reason may purify the motive without faith, but only for a season. The motive itself will need washing as often "as the dishes are washed."

He that does good to another man, does also good to himself, not only in the consequence, but in the very act of doing it; for the consciousness of well doing is very ample reward.

I tell thee, scholar, God has two dwellings—one in heaven, and the other in a meek and thankful heart.—Izaak. Walton.

The longer I live, the more highly do I estimate the Christian Sabbath, and the more grateful I feel towards those who impress its importance on the community.—Webster.

It is almost always when things are all blocked up and impossible that a happening comes. It has to. A deadlock cannot last any more than a vacuum. If you are sure you are looking and ready, that is all you need. God is turning the world round all the time.—A. D. T. Whitney.

The secret of power for this end is disclosed in the words, "Because I go unto my Father." This carried in it the coming of the Holy Spirit. Hence the Acts of the Apostles "were in a most real sense the acts of the glorified Christ. Here is our power today—power as abiding and constant as any of the forces of nature. The praying heart knows it.—Rev. Dr. James Culross.